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L.A.'s true spy story

SALT II deb:

By Bob Zeller
Staff Writer

Even now, the story seems impossible to believe.

A 21-year-old Palos Verdes man, drifting in and out of college and odd jobs, is hired in July 1974 as a \$140-a-week clerk at TRW Defense and Space Systems Group in Redondo Beach, one of the nation's largest defense contractors.

Within five months, Christopher John Boyce is given top-secret clearance and assigned to work in the Black Vault, a TRW communications center through which some of the nation's most sensitive defense secrets pass.

In the heart of the Black Vault, Boyce for two years works as a kind of switchboard operator, decoding daily secret messages from the CIA and transmitting outgoing messages.

When work is slow, Boyce joins some of his TRW colleagues for cocktails in the Black Vault, mixing "screwdrivers" in the CIA's document shredder.

The brilliant, articulate son of an ex-FBI agent, Boyce becomes disgusted by the CIA secret activities that he reads about each day.

So he develops a plan to sell the nation's defense secrets to the Soviet Union. Boyce convinces Andrew Daulton Lee, a narcotics dealer who was his close boyhood friend in Palos Verdes, to deliver the secrets to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City.

For 22 months, Boyce and Lee are Soviet spies, selling some of the nation's most highly classified defense information. Boyce is able to smuggle documents out of the Black Vault as easily as liquor is smuggled in.

THEY EARN \$80,000 before the scheme falls apart when Lee is arrested by Mexican police for acting suspiciously outside the Russian embassy in January 1977.

Both young men are convicted of espionage in federal court in Los Angeles. Boyce is sentenced to 40 years in prison; Lee gets a life term.

This true story is told in *The Falcon and the Snowman*, published this month by Simon and Schuster and written by Robert Lindsey, Los Angeles bureau chief for The New York Times.

More than a compelling spy story, the book revealed enough about the nation's intelligence network to raise a few eyebrows during U.S. Senate debates on the strategic arms limitation treaty (SALT II).

The book also may affect a petition Boyce has filed in federal court in Los Angeles to have his prison term reduced.

On Oct. 11 met in secret treaty between Union.

Verification the discussion, which was limited to senators only. Some senators have questioned whether the U.S. intelligence network can adequately verify that the Soviets are complying with the terms of the treaty.

WHILE CIA DIRECTOR Stansfield Turner was testifying, Sen. William S. Cohen, R-Maine, began asking detailed, precise questions that clearly showed Cohen had read the book, said Mike Donley, an aide to Sen. Roger W. Jepsen, R-Iowa, another committee member.

It was a brief exchange, a "flash in the pan," Donley said, but Cohen's questions "caught the attention of the other senators, as well as Turner's replies."

The questions and answers during that exchange have not been revealed, but they probably dealt with the security of the U.S. spy-satellite network, which would help verify Soviet compliance of any SALT II treaty.

This is evident because *The Falcon and the Snowman* reveals in detail for the first time that Boyce and Lee sold the Soviets hundreds of documents with extensive information about the satellite network. It also reveals a stunning laxness in security at TRW that enabled Boyce to gain access to and eventually steal the documents.

The stolen documents that the U.S. government used to help convict Boyce and Lee dealt solely with the Pyramider project, a proposed top-secret satellite system that would enable the CIA to communicate instantly with its agents anywhere in the world.

TRW developed plans for the Pyramider project at the CIA's request, but it was judged too costly and never approved.

Lindsey writes, however, that Boyce and Lee sold the Soviets much more than just the plans for the Pyramider project. He says the United States would have preferred to let Boyce and Lee go free rather than reveal at their trial how much information they sold.

The thousands of documents that the Soviets bought contained, among other things, detailed information about Projects Rhyolite and Argus, two spy satellite systems manufactured by TRW, Lindsey says.

The loss is significant, he writes, because the more they know about the U.S. spy satellites, the easier it is for the Soviets to blunt their effectiveness.

The book's revelations are apparently what sparked Cohen's questions to Turner during the closed committee hearing.

And Cohen's questions apparently made other senators realize that the Boyce-Lee case "involved

Letter, Bob

orig TRW

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CIA 1-01 TURNER, Adm

Cohen, William S.

orig SALT

CIA 1-04 Pherson, Kathy

(orig under Zeller)